gation Ministers was recently held at Madras:

(b) if so, what were the subjects discussed at that Conference;

(c) whether it is also a fact that a two day national conference of State Irrigation and Water Resources Ministers was held at New Delhi on 8th and 9th July, 1986;

(d) if so, what are the details of the discussions held and the outcome thereof; and

(e) what progress has so far been made with regard to the formulation of a National Water Policy?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Subjects discussed include integrated water resources planning and development, utilisation of irrigation potential, cyclones, floods, and droughts, man-power planning, training and research, tribal sub-plans, special component plans, etc.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Important issues arising out of the regional Conferences of Irrigation and Water Resources Ministers were discussed at the National Conference, and in the concluding session held on 21st July, 1986, recommendations/decisions were finalised regarding basin master-plan, catchment treatment, environment and forest clearance, projects clearance, prioritisation of on-going projects, funding for projects, water rates drought management etc.

(e) The draft of the National Water Policy is under preparation.

Demands of the Indian and Eastern News Papers Society

641. SHRI SHANKER SINH VAGHELA:
SHRI RAM AWADESH SINGH:
SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION & BROADCASTING be pleased to State:

(a) whether on 1st July, 1986 the Indian and Eastern News Papers Society had given a strike call to newspapers in the country;

(b) if so, what are the demands of the Indian and Eastern News Papers Society and Government's response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION & BROADCASTING (SHRI V. N. GADGIL): (a) Reports to this effect appearing in the Press have come to the notice of the Government.

(b) According to the Press reports, the closure had been called for as a mark of protest against the alleged arbitrary policy of the Government in the matter of allowing higher quantum of Interim Relief to the Newspaper Employees, increase in newsprint prices, low rates for Government advertisements etc.

The Government is fully committed to the growth of a free Press in the country and has been taking all possible steps in a rational manner for its overall development within the constraints posed by limited availability of country's resources.

Cultivation of Oilseeds in Sea Water

642. SHRI KAILASH PATI MISHRA:
SHRI SHANKER SINH VAGHELA:
SHRI MUKHTIAR SINGH MALIK:
SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a report published in the Hindustan Times on June 9, 1986 to the effect that India has been offerred technology by some US concerns to grow oilseed crops in sea-water, which promises tre-

mendous potentiality to save foreign exchange on edible oil imports;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) when was the offer made and what is Government's reaction in regard thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COOPERATION (SHRI YOGENDRA MAKWANA): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. A former U.S. Senator Charles H. Percy and Associates, Inc. of U.S.A. has made a proposal regarding the project on an oil bearing halophyte (salt-tolerant plant) which can be grown on lands adjacent to sea-coast with sea-water irrigation and its potential use in India through Indian Embassy in U.S.A. During his visit to India, the Project proposal was also discussed by Mr. Charles Percy on 13-3-86 with the Union Minister for Agriculture followed by another meeting on 29-4-86 between Mr. Wood Prince, a representative of Mr. Charles Percy and Senior Officers of the Ministry of Agriculture. Mr. Prince was not responsive to provide the seeds to a public sector organisation like National Seeds Corporation in India for testing as also not ready to divulge the botanical identity of the plant. It was told clearly to the U.S. Company that unless the complete technology is made available, it would not be possible for India to introdduce any unknown exotic variety of the plant.

Functioning of CART

643 SHRI KAILASH PATI MISHRA:
SHRI SHANKER SINH VAGHELA:
SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the year in which the Council for Advancement of Rural Technology started working;

(b) the expenditure that has been incurred on it so far and what is the number of its projects with locations thereof; and

(c) what benefit has so far accrued to the common farmer as a result of its activities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE THE DEPARTMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI RAMANAND YADAV): (a) The Council for Advancement of Rural Technology was registered in October, 1982 and it became operational in February, 1984, when the first Director General joined.

(b) An expenditure of Rs. 3,89,38,910 has been incurred upto end of June, 1986. A Statement showing names of projects and their locations is annexed. [*See* Appendix CXXXIX, Annexure No. 35].

(c) The charter of the Council provides that it shall function as the nodal agency for coordinating all efforts at development and extension of rural technology in sectors other than those dealt with by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and its sister bodies. Nevertheless, the spread effects of the variegated projects assisted by CART would be felt by the small and marginal farmers. However, considering the time of commissioning of the projects, it is too early to evaluate in concrete terms the benefit that had accrued to the common farmer. Also, since the projects are many and varied, benefits to the rural community would require to be evaluated